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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 000416

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: PM CONCERNED ABOUT MAOISTS AND KING

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

11. (C) Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala expressed concern to the Ambassador February 22 that the UN arms management exercise had not been satisfactorily completed. Although the UN had told the PM that the quantity of weapons was satisfactory, the PM was not satisfied that enough weapons had been locked up or that the weapons of Maoist protective details had been accounted for. The Government of Nepal (GON) did not want to allow the Maoists into the government until the registration and verification process was complete, but felt pressure from the Maoists and the UN to do just that. The GON was upset about the Maoist combatants leaving their cantonment in Chitwan but pleased that the UN had so quickly condemned the action. Regarding the unrest in the Terai, the PM stated that an inclusive round-table conference was necessary to find a comprehensive solution to the problems for all marginalized peoples. The PM worried about the recent speech given by the King, acknowledging that the King was a distraction that the Maoists could use to their advantage.

Arms Management Not Satisfactory

12. (C) On February 22, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala told the Ambassador that he was worried about the UN arms management exercise. The types and quality of weapons that had gone into the containers in the Maoist cantonments was not enough to satisfy the GON, although the UN had said that the weapons exercise was satisfactory. Dr. Suresh Chalise, the PM's Foreign Policy Advisor, added that the UN had told the GON that the list of weapons turned in "broadly corresponded" with the list of captured weapons the GON gave to the UN. The Ambassador suggested that the government tell the UN-led Joint Monitoring Coordination Committee that the weapons were not sufficient and demand that the Maoists produce more of their high-quality weapons before the exercise was considered complete. The Prime Minister said his bottom line was that all monitoring equipment would need to be in place and the second stage of verification (where the UN culls the non-combatants out of the camps) needed to be completed before he could consider arms management

complete.

Registering for Maoist Protective Details

13. (C) The PM said there would be a decision soon on the weapons carried by Maoist protective details. Only a small amount of weapons would be allowed for small number of people in the details, and such protection would only be provided for the highest levels of the Maoist leadership. All of these weapons would need to be registered by the UN monitoring team. In order to make the weapons held by the protective details legal, Chalise noted, the GON planned to legally license and register the weapons outside of the UN process as well. The Ambassador added that such a step would make it easier to identify illegally held weapons by Maoist militia in the countryside, which would be an important step toward relieving fear of Maoist intimidation in those rural areas.

Pressure From the UN

14. (C) Both the PM and Chalise felt pressure from the UN to accept arms management as complete and move forward on an interim government soon. Chalise said that Ian Martin, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative to Nepal, had "not been keen to separate the Maoist militia from the People's Liberation Army combatants" in the cantonments. Chalise made it clear that the GON would not allow the Maoists into the government until arms management was complete but complained that pressure from the UN and the Maoists was making this stance more difficult. The

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Ambassador stressed that the U.S. would support the decision made by the GON regarding arms management and that he would speak with Martin later in the day to discuss the issue (septel).

Departure From Cantonments a Serious Breach

15. (C) The PM said that the departure of nearly 3,000 Maoist combatants from the third division cantonment in Chitwan was a serious breach of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. He was pleased that the UN had taken a strong stance against the move. The Ambassador promised to publicly condemn the action as well; the Maoists had made a tactical mistake that hurt their credibility in negotiations and the GON should also condemn it.

Delay in Election Likely

16. (C) The Ambassador asked whether the PM believed the Maoists were attempting to put off the election to the Constituent Assembly by walking out of the camps. While the PM said he could not speak to the intentions of the Maoists, he suspected that the elections would not be held in June as expected; the GON, however, did not want to be blamed by the Maoists for any delay so no one in the GON would say anything publicly about the possibility.

Terai - No Solution Forthcoming

17. (C) The PM said that a round-table conference that included people from all marginalized groups was the only way to find a comprehensive solution to the problem in the Terai. The Ambassador told the PM that the U.S. would help in any way it could, and hoped that the PM could find a way to make such talks happen quickly.

Worry Over King's Actions

¶18. (C/NF) The Prime Minister said that the King's February 19 speech was objectionable and that he had expressed those sentiments to the King's secretary. The King was the lesser of two evils to worry about, because he did not have strong grassroots support like the Maoists. However, the Maoists were using the issue of the monarchy to gain support and exert pressure on the GON to move toward a democratic republican setup for the country. The PM believed he was being dragged toward supporting a republic by the Maoists and other parties, and worried that if the King pulled another stunt like the speech, the PM would have no choice but to go along.

(C/NF) Abdication a Good Option - But Unlikely

¶19. (C/NF) The Ambassador asked whether the PM still supported the idea of the King and the Crown Prince abdicating in favor of the Crown Prince's young son. The PM responded that that was what should happen, and the son should be put into regency under the GON. If the Nepal Army asked the King to abdicate, he might concede, but the PM did not think the NA would ask. If the monarchy were to survive as an institution, the King would have to abdicate, the PM stressed, but he acknowledged that he had no idea whether this would ever happen.

Comment

¶10. (C) While the Prime Minister has a strong position on arms management, he does not have clear action plans on any of the other main issues facing Nepal today, the unrest in the Terai or the King. Overloaded by multiple challenges and internal Seven-Party Alliance-Maoist divisions, the GON continues to let problems fester until they become even more unmanageable. That said, the GON's position is by no means

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untenable. For the most part, the Madhesis and other marginalized groups want a greater say in the running of the state, not independence. Moreover, the Maoists have seen their support among the Madhesis virtually disappear. Additionally, when the Maoists walked out of their cantonments, the government potentially gained some leverage in ongoing negotiations about arms management and forming the interim government. We will continue to urge the GON to press forward on all fronts.
MORIARTY